

Kaluaaha Congregational Church
N. side State Rt. 45, approx. 1.5
mi. W. of Pukoo (vicinity)
(Molokai Island)
Maui County
Hawaii

HABS No. HI-51

HABS
HI,
3-PUKOV,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HABS
HI,
5-PUKO.V,
1-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

KALUAHA CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

HABS No. HI-51

Location: North side State route 45, approximately 1.5 miles west of Pukoo, Molokai, Maui County, Hawaii

Present Owner: United Church of Christ

Present Occupant: Kaluaaha Congregational Church

Present Use: Monthly church services

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Kaluaaha Church, known as the Mother Church on Molokai, is the oldest Congregational Church on the island. It is also one of the largest churches built in its time in Hawaii.

The Hawaiian Association, meeting in Lahaina, Maui, on June 19, 1833, adopted a resolution stating: "Resolved that the native Hawaiian members of the Church resident at Kaluaaha, Molokai, be a particular Church with the Reverend Harvey Rexford Hitchcock as pastor."¹ Reverend Hitchcock arrived in Honolulu from Massachusetts in May 1832 on the Averick with his wife Rebecca. It is thought that he visited Molokai for four days in July of that year to find a suitable site for the first mission station. Reverend Hitchcock preached his first sermon in Hawaiian the last week of Sept. 1832 in the open air. In the Molokai Station Report, November 7, 1832 - June 1, 1833 (page 5), Reverend Hitchcock wrote "in about two months a meeting house was finished 30 feet by 120." It was probably built of thatch.

The second meeting house was of a more permanent nature:

"The meeting house ... has been completed. It is built of stone laid up in mud mixed with grass. The walls are three feet thick; It is 90 feet long and 42 wide and 12 feet high plastered and whitewashed outside and in. The frame of the house is of the first rate. The thatching is of the leaf of the spiral pandanus, surmounted at the ends and ridgepole by a thick border of the ki leaf. The framework inside is concealed by large light-colored mats nailed to the underside of the beams, and the floor consists of a carpet of the same material. the pulpit is three feet high made perfectly plain. The base is a block of masonry. It accommodates probably between 1200 and 1300 hearers. It could not have been built by contract for less than \$2000 but has cost the mission little more than \$100. It was dedicated December 6 when Mr. Richards preached The house was crowded and hundreds could not get in."²

The need for a larger building and the probability that repairs on the 1835 building were imminent were reported in the Molokai Station Report 1843 (pages 2-3) which continued, "it [the new building] has been commenced ... and the stone work about 1/4 or a little more up." This was the third and present church, completed in 1844.

"Our main work the past year has been the erection of a permanent house of worship ... Preparing most of the timber and getting it onto the ground from the distance of ten miles or more, procuring many of the stones for building, and some of the lime, Mason and Carpenter work has all been done within the compass of a year...

The house has been completed nearly two months. It is 100 feet long by 50 broad outside; walls 2-1/2 feet thick and 18 feet high. It has a gallery 18 feet wide across the breadth of the house and is lathed with American lath and plastered overhead somewhat arched. The thatching is pilimaoli. It leaks but little; has 4 doors three of which are 7 feet high and about as wide, and one of the ordinary size; 8 windows with each 50 lights of glass and two others 12 each. The cost of the house beside stone, lime, timber, and gratuitous labor of the people has been between 800 and 900 dollars, probably nearer the latter amount ..."³

The church was dedicated on April 3, 1844. "Many people attended the services ... On the Sabbath the house was so full that the upper story of the building almost collapsed for the weight was too heavy."⁴

Although the original roofing material is vague, the Molokai Station Report 1852 (page 6) reports that the "house at Kaluaaha needs re-roofing" and in 1853 (page 2) that "Mr. H(itchcock) began to re-roof the meeting house with shingles."

The dilapidated condition of the church building was reported in 1897, but it appears that it was not re-roofed and replastered until 1899.⁵ After this there was apparently a period of "disuse" until 1908 as noted by the church report for that year. "The installation of Rev. Isaac D. Iaea as pastor of the long vacant Kaluaaha Church was an occasion of great joy and satisfaction to the people of this sidetracked island. The fine old church was filled."⁶

Not many years later the church underwent a major restoration. The work was begun in 1916 under the direction of Mr. H. R. Hitchcock, grandson of the first pastor, and the church was rededicated in August 1917. The repairs amounting to nearly \$1000 consisted of refacing the rock walls inside and out with heavy coatings of re-inforced concrete, the setting up

of wooden columns to support the corrugated iron roof, the remodelling of the platform and windows and the repainting of the whole interior.⁷ Repairs were made again in 1933 on the occasion of the centennial of the Kaluaaha mission but since extensive work had been done in 1917 these were only minor.

Today Kaluaaha Church is badly in need of repairs. The coral and stone walls are crumbling in spots, the lumber in the steeple and the roof is rotten. On May 15, 1967 the steeple, which had tilted for years, fell from its base to the ground. However, dedicated members of this once flourishing church have met to plan repairs for their building and it is hoped that the church which has both religious and historical significance, can be restored.

Notes: (Manuscript materials available at HMCS Library, Hon., Hawaii)

¹Hawaiian Evangelical Association, records, 1823-1826, pages 9-10.
(Hereafter cited as HEA)

²Missionary Herald, February 1837, page 71; Report H.R. Hitchcock to ABCFM, April 1836.

³Molokai Station Report, May 20, 1844.

⁴Ka Nonanona, May 14, 1844, Book 4, Honolulu, Ed. 2.

⁵HEA Report, 1899, page 12.

⁶HEA Report, 1908, page 49.

⁷The Friend, September 1917, page 199.

Prepared by: Karmen Tiaht
Hawaii State Archives
August 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Condition of fabric: Unfortunately, termites and the elements have so seriously damaged the fabric over the years that a major stabilization, if not restoration, would be required to preserve it. Recognizing this, a small dedicated group of parishioners who recognize its historic value as a monument to the earliest Christian influences on the island, have presently initiated steps toward this end.

Major faults in the fabric are most evident in the condition of the walls and buttresses, which were stabilized in 1917. Large cracks have developed where the reinforced concrete buttresses join the exterior walls, exposing the steel to the weather. This same condition occurs in large areas of the exterior walls. In addition, major cracks are developing at the openings on the interior.

The badly deteriorated condition of the wood framing was emphatically demonstrated on May 15, 1967 when the steeple, which had been listing, finally crashed to the ground. Although there is much new timber evident in the roof framing, the framing for the wood ceiling and the wood ceiling itself is practically destroyed by termites.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This is a single story rectangular building, measuring 52' x 102'. The large attic is approximately 16' - 10" high. The steeple rose approximately 73' - 6" above the ground.
2. Foundations: Although not accessible, it is logical to assume that foundations are coral.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: The original coral bearing walls, which were recorded as 2' - 6" thick and 18' high are now faced with 6" of reinforced rubble concrete on both the interior and the exterior. Reinforcing steel is both horizontal and vertical. The walls are finished smooth on both faces, and the exterior was painted red. There are reinforced concrete buttresses on both sides and the rear.
4. Structural system, framing: The roof and ceiling framing obviously date from several periods, with some very early ohia wood members "in place" (or possibly re-used). What appear to be the earliest ceiling spanning members consist of 6" x 6" timbers, made from two or three lengths spliced with mortise and tennon and external wood gussets and square-cut nails. These members are spaced 10' on center with a vertical tennon and iron straps centered on the span to receive a former vertical member. Cross beams, which are 12" (6 full 2" member laminated) x 15", bear on wall columns and two intermediate 1' - 1-1/2" square columns. (The intermediate columns were added in 1917). There is also a 6" x 6" wall plate at the top of each wall. 4" x 4" modern roof rafters support 4" x 6" purlins and 1" x 3" roof nailers. Tower framing consists of horizontal 8" x 8" members supporting 8" x 8" posts which continue up as corner posts for the second stage of the tower.

5. Porches, stoops: There are modern concrete pads on grade at the three doorways. At the doors on the south wall there is an additional concrete step. On the interior at all doorways, there is a small concrete entrance and an additional concrete step up to the wooden floor of the church.
6. Chimneys: None.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are three doorways, each containing two 5-panel wooden doors, obviously not original. The main entrance is on the axis of the west wall and the other two doorways are on the south wall. They are set deep within the reveal of the wall in modern door trim. Earliest records describe these doorways "and a smaller door" (Ka Nonanona, May 14, 1844, Book 4, Honolulu, ed. 2). Although it is not evident today, it was probably at the east end.
 - b. Windows: Today, there are 8 modern redwood double-hung 9/9 windows, three on each side. On the west entrance wall there are two small single-light windows high above the ground. The above reference (Ka Nonanona) also states "There are 8 windows with 12 panes in each." There is a different description in the Molokai Station Report, May 20, 1844, which lists "8 windows with each 50 lights of glass and two others 12 each."
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The existing corrugated iron gabled roof seems to date from the 1917 restoration. It is in a bad state of repair, especially on the left side. The original roof was hipped and appears to have been covered with thatch. A shingle roof was applied in 1851 (Molokai Station Report, 1853, page 3). There may have been one previous corrugated roof prior to 1917. (See description of Tower, below).
 - c. Tower: Since May 15, 1967, the only remains of the steeple located over the entrance are the first stage and the west, north and south walls of the second stage. The tower consisted originally of three diminishing stages terminated by an octagonal shingled spire with a weather-vane. The walls of the three stages, square in plan, were shingled, painted red, and had white corner boards. The front eave of the second stage is ornamented with a white, small scale, scalloped fascia board. At the third stage, a band of jig-sawn dentils was applied at the top edge of a band of

large scale scallops. There are fixed louvers in the second stage. Reconstruction of the third stage indicates that two adjustable shutters were fixed (not hinged) in the openings, although the jambs have fragments of slots to receive (previous) fixed wood louvers.

From investigation on the ground of the slender octagonal spire it is possible to approximate a reconstruction. The ridge measures 15' - 8", with a shingled surface within the corner boards measuring 2' - 1" at the base and 3" at the top of the taper. This was surmounted by a 13" high lead covered wood base for the pipe weathervane, 5' high.

It is difficult to establish the date of the tower, since the first stage has been framed over an existing corrugated roof, which may or may not be prior to the 1917 roof. The HEA Report, 1899, page 12, reports that "the old Mission Church at Kaluaaha, Molokai has been re-roofed and replastered", but does not mention the material used. The bell was cast by H.N. Hopper, Boston, in 1844. Speaking of the churches on Molokai, the Kaluaaha Church Report, July 1, 1869 - May 31, 1870 (translated by H.P. Judd in HEA files) mentions "They are placing bells on the towers except the mother church which is on a little elevation." Ka Nonanona, mentioned above, shows an engraving of the church building without a steeple or a bell.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The interior measures 44' - 8" x 94' - 3". The space is divided into three bays by wall columns and two intermediate columns, supporting exposed beams in the longitudinal direction of the church. The Friend, September 1917, page 199 mentions the renovation to include "the setting up of great wooden columns to support the corrugated iron roof." There are no other references to the interior columns. Also, the Ka Nonanona, May 14, 1844 mentions a gallery 18' x 50'. The first row of existing columns is approximately 18' from the entrance. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume the balcony extended this far from the rear wall. The Molokai Station Report, May 20, 1844, stated that the gallery "...is lathed with American lath and plastered overhead somewhat arched."
2. Stairways: None.
3. Flooring: Wood.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The existing interior walls are smooth finished reinforced concrete, painted. This surface dates from the 1917 work. The ceiling consists of 3/4" boards nailed directly to the ceiling joists.

D. Site:

The church is located approximately 14 miles east of Kaunakakai, the major settlement on the island. The entrance faces a westerly direction. A rubble stone wall encloses the side of the property near the road. The church sits in a clearing on a slight rise approximately 267 feet from the road against a backdrop of 4500 feet mountains in the distance.

The immediately adjacent out-buildings consist of the church hall and a small building with restroom facilities. There are several frame houses farther away which were part of the mission complex. Reputedly the school, which may have been 1835 church, was located about a quarter of a mile farther east.

There is no formal landscaping, although several varieties of tropical plants are growing at the base of the church. Also on the site are Keawe and Coconut palms. There was a stone wall approximately 17' from the building on the southwest side. It is now a sloping grass terrace.

Prepared by: Woodrow W. Wilkins
Project Supervisor
August 7, 1967